Jvertisements, cooperation of the general public has also been sought to report any regularity/malpractice to the OMCs.

The officials of OMCs carry out random checks at distributors godowns, delivery poin;s, . well as en-route to ensure that no misuse takes place. The distributors of OMCs are under net instructions to check the weight of cylinders at their godowns before delivery, and only linders with the specified weight are to be delivered to the customers. The distributors ave also been instructed to ensure that the seals are verified and shown to the customers at the time of delivery. In case any under-weight cylinder is received by the customer, such& /linders are replaced free of charge by the OMCs-

Russia's participation in mining sector

3053. SHRIMAT1 SUPR1YASULE: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL. HAS be pleased to state:

whether India and Moscow had discussed cooperation in the oil and gas sector during is visit to Moscow in December 2007;

whether in the meeting both sides noted that India has emerged as a hub for refining in A**sia** and Indian exports of refined petroleum products to some of the world's most Dphisticated markets have reached S40 billion and the growing refining sector in India has ffered immense opportunities for Russian companies: and

to what extent Russia has agreed to help to explore India's refining sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL AS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) During the visit of Minister of Petroleum and Jatural Gas to Russia from 25-27 November, 2007 it was agreed that the national oil ompanies of the two countries would cooperative in mutually beneficial projects in the fields of exploration and production, grassroot refineries, modernization of refineries, gas based petrochemical plants, gas processing plants and participation in liquefied Natural Gas LNG) projects.

Closure of outlets by Reliance/Essar

3054. DR. (SHRIMATI) NAJMA A. HEPTULLA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

whether it is a fact that Reliance and Essar Groups have closed down about **900** iutlets as they were runing into losses due to rising prices of crude oil;

if so, whether Government is aware that these outlets are selling petrol and diesel at ligher prices; and

if so, whether Government would provide them level playing field and pass on subsidy ir reduce duties so that consumers do not suffer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL 3AS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has informed hat the sales at their retail outlets (ROs) are negligible due to selling price differential between private and public sector ROs, leading to the closure of their ROs. EOL have not 'let decided to shutdown their ROs.

(c) The prices of sensitive petroleum products are fixed by the Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) in consultation with the Government. Private oil companies are not subject to pricing restrictions by the Government and are free to take their pricing decisions on commercial considerations.

Autonomy to Navaratna Oil Companies

3055. SHRIRAMDASAGARWAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

whether Government is considering to enhance autonomy of Navaratna Oil Companies in respect of execution of Mega Projects;

whether it is a fact that as per Department of Public Enterprise's guidelines Government Oil Companies are required to take permission of Government, if individual project exceeds limit of Rupees one thousand crore;

whether Government is also considering to merge various oil companies into one major player in the fields of exploration, revival and marketing respectively; and

if so, what is the reaction of Government pertaining to grant of autonomy to Navaratna Oil Companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (d) In line with its policy of granting greater autonomy, the Government has delegated enhanced powers to the Boards of Navaratna Oil Companies, (i) to incur capital expenditure without any monetary ceiling and (ii) to establish financial joint ventures and wholly owned subsidiaries in India or abroad subject to ceiling of 15% of the net worth of the Public Sector Enterprise (PSE) in one project, limited to Rs. 1000 crore and overall ceiling on such investment, in all projects put together, shall be 30% of the net worth of the PSE.

In line with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Synergy in Energy under the Chairmanship of Dr. V. Krishnamurthy, Kochi Refineries Limited (KRL) and IBP Company Limited have been merged with their holding companies Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) respectively.

Cultivation of bio-fuel plant

3056. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

whether the public sector oil companies propose to sign contract farming agreements with farmers for cultivation of bio-fuel producing plants in the country;

if so, the details thereof;

the details of the incentives Government proposes to extend such farmers; and

the details of the steps taken by Government to expedite implementation of such agreements?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.